

## THE GRAY GRASS

Gu ru 'phrin las ཀུ་རུ་ཤྭ་རྩིན་ལས། (Gerichengli 格日成立)\*

A zigzagging brook flowed through a big valley shrouded in the morning fog. Black yak-hair and canvas tents were pitched along the banks of a creek. Herdswomen, their heads wrapped in red scarves, milked yaks and collected fresh dung in their family's yak enclosures. Yaks and horses loomed through the thick fog, grazing near the tents and each side of the creek. Dogs barked when a boy, Don grub, sang as he drove his family's yaks from a hill toward his family tent.

Inside a small canvas tent pitched next to a black yak-hair tent, forty-three-year-old Bdud 'dul raised his upper body from the bed and lit a cigarette with a cheap lighter. Once it was lit and glowing, he inhaled deeply while gazing at the lower part of the tent flapping in a gentle breeze. Motionless, he was entirely engrossed in thought.

"That boy would be alive if I hadn't visited my cousin on the way to the township town. I was a little bit late! I couldn't save his life. Why did he end his life that way? Stupid! Jumping off the Yellow River Bridge! I should have shouted and stopped him from doing such a fucking stupid thing. I didn't get near enough to grab him. I'm sure he could hear me clearly if I had shouted at the end of the bridge as he jumped from the middle. Why didn't I shout at him? I'm fucking dumb. How pathetic. Nothing is more precious than life."

He stubbed out the butt of his exhausted cigarette once it burned his fingers, listlessly remaining in bed, staring through the tent door. Sadness and depression registered on his round, deeply tanned face. But then he stood, pulled on his robe, and squirmed into his shoes, thinking, "I'll never have another chance to save a human life that can atone for the sin of killing a person."

He sighed as he exited the tent and walked toward the black yak hair tent where his twelve-year-old son, Don grub, joined his

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parents for breakfast after driving the family's yaks to a small valley. Lha mo, three years younger than her husband, Bdud 'dul, glanced at him as he sat beside their boy. She read the sadness in his gaunt face and said, "Don't wear a face of misery. Our son and I want to see your happy face every morning!"

A faint smile crept onto Bdud 'dul's face as Don grub smiled at him. Looking at his son's reddish cheeks, he was reminded of a friend who had often visited his family with his friends, chatting cheerfully for hours. Bdud 'dul thought, "I was cheerful and humorous before imprisonment. People liked to visit my family and chat. I've been withdrawn and unhappy since returning from prison. Maybe that's why my family has few visitors."

Lha mo looked at Bdud 'dul's tangled, dirty shoulder-length hair and said, "You haven't washed your face and hair for weeks. Why don't you wash your hair to refresh yourself."

Bdud 'dul sipped his tea and murmured, "I'll wash my hair after breakfast," without looking at Lha mo.

"Seems you didn't sleep well last night again."

"I dreamed of the boy. Why did he end his life that way?"

"He lived with his uncle's family and herded their yaks after his mother died. His uncle beat him every time wolves killed a yak."

"Young people lack the courage to face life," Bdud 'dul said and, looking at his son, added, "Be kind to others. Cruelty ruins your life and leads to regret."

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Bdud 'dul lit a butter lamp on a small wooden table in front of aligned religious figures, reciting mantras, intoning, "All living beings can avoid suffering and enjoy happiness." He'd learned this from his mother. She had often asked him to light butter lamps every morning and night after his father, a famous hunter, had died from a heart attack. His father killed and butchered deer and brought the meat home to feed his family. He also trapped wolves and foxes and sold the skins to buy food and clothes for his family. His mother believed lighting butter lamps could reduce her dead husband's sin. She beat her son once she discovered he forgot to

light butter lamps in the morning. His mother died when he turned fifteen, eight years after his father's death.

Bdud 'dul sat cross-legged, chanting scriptures and spinning a prayer wheel next to his son, who was stretched out on a mat writing homework. He was in grade four and concerned his Tibetan teacher would beat him if he didn't finish his homework before he returned to school after the summer vacation. He remembered that his teacher beat a student who didn't finish his Tibetan assignment for the last winter vacation. The teacher asked four male students to grab the student, and then he beat his butt with a wooden stool leg. The student couldn't sit the following day.

Lha mo was fixing lunch, tossing pieces of yak meat into a pot on the stove. Smoke and an acrid smell wafted out of the pot as the meat fried in the hot oil, causing Lha mo to cough. Don grub raised his head, glancing from his notebook to the pot. Looking at him, his mother said, "Quickly finish your homework. Lunch is about ready."

Don grub swallowed and declared, "I can't write an essay."

"What's the topic?" his mother asked.

"The love between father and son."

His mother stirred the meat, added potato chunks, and suggested, "If I were you, I could write that essay in a few minutes."

As Don grub snickered, Bdud 'dul stared at his son and thought, "It's hard for him to write such an essay. He didn't get much love from me. I was imprisoned when he was four and released only a year ago. He spent most of his time at school in the year I was back from prison."

He asked his son, "Is writing about you and your mother's love, OK?"

A big smile spread across Don grub's face. "Yeah, good idea. The teacher said to write about parents and their children's love," and he rushed out of the tent to pee just as his mother asked, "Do you want rice?"

A few minutes later, he raced into the tent, sat beside his mother, and said, "No rice for me."

His oily, crumpled books and notebooks were scattered beside a mat on the ground.

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Normally, Don grub drove the family's yaks back home, but since his son was busy writing his homework, Bdud 'dul walked toward his family's yaks at the bottom of the valley. Bdud 'dul's cousin, Nyi ma, and a neighbor were riding yaks toward their families' yaks in an adjoining valley. When they saw Bdud 'dul, the neighbor commented, "How compassionate! I rarely see him riding yaks and horses to herd. By walking, he's accumulating merit and mitigating his sins."

Nyi ma returned, "No, he's worried his family's riding yaks will die if he rides them."

"No need for concern since his family is the richest in our community. He's got many riding yaks."

"His family and mine have the same number of yaks. My family has more horses than his."

The neighbor nodded and didn't want to argue with Nyi ma. The neighbor annoyed Nyi ma each time they debated which family was the richest in their community.

They sang and chatted as they disappeared into the valley.

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Bdud 'dul tossed and turned in bed. Lha mo turned on a flashlight when he started heavily sweating and looked at her wristwatch. It was three AM. She looked at her husband and noticed beads of sweat coursing down his cheeks. She wiped the precipitation from his head with her palm and said, "You need to see a doctor. Each time I told you to see a doctor, you said, 'I'm fine. Don't need to see a doctor.'"

Bdud 'dul took a long breath and turned over to avoid the light in his eyes. Turning off the flashlight, his wife slid it under her pillow and asked, "Dreamed about the boy again?"

"Not this time. Dreamed of the person I ..." his words petered out.

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Don grub drove his family's yaks to a mountain after breakfast and promised to herd them the whole day without coming home for lunch. Pouring lukewarm water into a basin, Lha mo set it next to Bdud 'dul, handed him a towel, looked at his dirty, oily hair, and ordered, "Wash your hair. I asked you to wash your hair yesterday, but you didn't. I'll ask Nyi ma to help you to see a doctor."

Bdud 'dul threw the towel into the basin and said, "Don't bother him. He needs to herd his family's yaks."

Lha mo left the tent without replying, but before he had finished washing his hair and face, she returned with Nyi ma. Nyi ma's family lived only a few minutes away. Lha mo offered Nyi ma a bowl of tea. In the meantime, Bdud 'dul combed his hair and struggled with the tangles between the comb's teeth due to not washing his hair for weeks. Sipping tea, Nyi ma looked at Bdud 'dul, commenting, "You're thinner. Not sleeping well at night and appetite loss must be from a serious illness. Lha mo is right. You must see a doctor."

Lha mo brought a clean robe and shirt from the canvas tent, handed them to Bdud 'dul, and said, "Put these on. Your robe and shirt are dirty."

Bdud 'dul plopped the clothes on a mat and asked, "Where's the motorcycle key?"

Lha mo said, "It must be under our pillow," and left the tent.

Bdud 'dul followed her without putting on the clean robe and shirt. Nyi ma came out after him. The motorcycle was parked near the black yak hair tent's entrance. Nyi ma asked, "Who's going to drive?"

"You do it. You drive better than me."

Lha mo handed the key to Nyi ma, who started the motorcycle. Bdud 'dul got behind him as Lha mo stared at her husband, "What a strange man! Likes to wear dirty clothes."

Bdud 'dul said nothing, and they drove away.

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Bdud 'dul sat listlessly near the window in the doctor's office, staring at a mother holding her three or four-year-old son on her

lap near the stove in the middle of the office. Tears trickled down his cheeks as the little boy cried from the headache pain caused by a high fever. Then Bdud 'dul's refocused on the doctor and Nyi ma chatting outside.

Nyi ma described the situation, "He's ill-tempered, has no appetite, has nightmares, and can't sleep well at night. He didn't have...." He paused, embarrassed to report what Lha mo had told him on the way from his home to Bdud 'dul's home a short time ago. But finally, he said, "His wife told me that his sexual desire is decreasing, and they hadn't had sex for days."

The doctor nodded, seemingly knowing exactly what medicine would cure his illness. They then entered the medicine storeroom next to the doctor's office and took some boxes of pills. Returning to the office, the doctor gave the boxes of pills to Bdud 'dul and explained the prescription. The doctor took the money from Bdud 'dul, reassuring him, "Don't worry. Take those pills and try to feel better when you are unhappy."

Bdud 'dul and his cousin thanked the doctor and left.

On the way home, they stopped to sit near a small river. As Nyi ma untied his sash, bottles of Cola fell out, rolling onto the ground. He spread his robe on the ground, took off his shoes, and sprawled out. He opened a bottle of Cola, slugged half of it down, belched, and then threw the bottle to Bdud 'dul, who was also lying on the ground. Bdud 'dul raised his upper body and opened the bottle. Fluid spurted out and trickled from the bottle, opening over his hand and onto the ground. Wiping the liquid from his hand on his robe, he sipped the Cola before lighting a cigarette. He inhaled heavily without exhaling any smoke from his nose. Later, having washed his feet in the river, Nyi ma covered his neck with his scarf declaring, "What a hot day! The sun scorched my neck."

Inhaling the fragrance of the various, colorful flowers as a breeze wafted toward him, Bdud 'dul took another sip of Cola, agreeing, "The weather's very hot. No rain for days."

Nyi ma picked up a blade of green grass, "Scary! It has turned red in some places where the grass is exposed to intense

sunshine."

"Right. Was that boy wearing sunglasses we met near the clinic yard gate Do do's son?"

"Yeah."

Bdud 'dul sighed and said, "Miserable boy! I feel sorry for him. I don't know how I can help him."

Startled, Nyi ma stared at Bdud 'dul with wide-open eyes, "If you're compassionate, you shouldn't have killed his father."

Bdud 'dul said, "Destiny determines everything," as they continued their trip.

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Bdud 'dul ate a bowl of rice with beef and cabbage for supper while his son had four bowls. Their bowls were the same size. When Lha mo urged him to have more, he said, "I'm full."

She worried he would lose more weight and become more ill. He then took two pills and went to bed. The couple slept in the canvas tent where they could easily protect their family's calves from wolf attack. Don grub slept in the black yak hair tent.

Lha mo got in bed with her husband, turned off her flashlight, slid it under their pillow, and then lay her head on it. Bdud 'dul turned to her and confided, "I saw Do do's son wearing a discolored, worn robe and a pair of sunglasses. He was with his friends and didn't see me. Should I find a way to help him? His family's poor."

Lha mo asked in surprise, "What? Aren't you afraid he'll avenge his father's death?"

"He's living with his grandmother. His parents divorced, and his father decided to raise his only child. Later, the boy lost his father."

"Others will think you are afraid of your enemies if you help him and his grandmother. It'll hurt your reputation as well as our son's."

Bdud 'dul didn't know how to respond and said nothing. Lha mo put a leg on his legs and moved beside him, stroking his chest and kissing his cheek and lips. She stopped and turned away when

Bdud 'dul showed no interest.

He dozed off after two hours of troubled thoughts and dreamed of Do do:

After bearded, fat Do do, smashed his fist into his face, Bdud 'dul tasted blood as it gushed from his nose. Groping in his robe pouch, Bdud 'dul pulled out a knife, unsheathed it and gripped it just as Do do jumped on top of him, sending him sprawling to the ground. In the process, Do do landed on the upright knife, sending it deep into his belly. Do do's progressively weaker attempts to stand continued as blood puddled around him. Bdud 'dul sheathed his bloody knife, fled, and was walking across a bridge when a boy wearing sunglass stopped him, aimed a pistol at him, and fired.

Bdud 'dul woke in terror and turned to his snoring wife but didn't wake her. He couldn't sleep for hours.

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Lha mo washed her hair in a stream near their family's tent as Bdud 'dul put his son's outgrown clothes in a bag and added a plastic bag with pieces of dried yak meat to a sack half-full of rice. He slung the sack over one shoulder and walked toward his impoverished neighbor's family, which included a seven-year-old boy, a nine-year-old girl, and his wife.

Lha mo later scolded, "Giving old clothes would make her unhappy. Poor people don't wear others' old clothes today."

"She was happy and thanked me."

He remembered what his mother had said and repeated, "The best way to accumulate merit is feeding, clothing, and housing poor people and making them happy."

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Bdud 'dul had given his poor neighbor the last of his family's rice, so he left home to buy food for his family the following day. He refused to put on the clean robe and shirt Lha mo suggested before leaving. He slowed the motorcycle when he noticed a small white tent pitched near the road. Upon hearing the motorcycle, a monk emerged from the tent and sat cross-legged on the ground. Bdud'



dul parked his motorcycle on the roadside, got off, and sat beside the monk who wore a string of big sandalwood prayer beads around his neck. He placed his hands in his lap and continued piously chanting, ignoring Bdud 'dul, who guessed the monk was a great tantric practitioner as he wore a dirty, tattered cassock, had long, dirty hair haphazardly wrapped around his head, and had an unkempt mustache under his big blunt nose.

When Bdud 'dul knelt, the monk opened his big eyes, looked at Bdud 'dul, and said, "Poor living beings. Every living being in the universe suffers."

Bdud 'dul put his palms together, held them to his chest, bowed to the monk, thinking, "How true!" and motionlessly waited to hear more.

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Lha mo offered a bowl of tea to Nyi ma, who had come to inquire about Bdud 'dul's health.

"The weather's extremely hot, so you must be thirsty. Drink some tea," encouraged Lha mo.

Nyi ma gazed into her beautiful eyes, "I'm not thirsty," then hesitated and added, "Are you thirsty?"

"I had a bowl of tea just before you came."

"I can quench your thirst if you're thirsty."

Lha mo giggled, went outside, looked around the tent, didn't see anyone nearby, and reentered the tent.

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A small bald man with little eyes played pool in a glass-enclosed room with his tall friend. The bald man lit a cigarette, looked outside, and noticed a short man with a sack of rice on his back that seemed so heavy it would push his head to the ground. Realizing it was Bdud 'dul, he commented, "Man-killer! Killing a person is the most sinful thing."

His friend looked and said, "He didn't deliberately kill his friend. They were both drunk. Bdud 'dul called Do do Big Nose, so Do do punched and fell on him, sending the knife Bdud 'dul held into his gut."

This made him recall teasing Do do, calling him Big Nose among their friends. That irritated Do, who thought he was the best-looking local man. He hated being called Big Nose.

The bald man said, "It doesn't matter if he killed his friend accidentally. What matters is he killed his friend. That's sinful."

"He felt guilty and regretted killing his friend."

"I broke many girls' hearts when I broke up with them. Later, I felt guilty and regretted breaking their hearts. But feeling guilty and regretting what I had done didn't make any difference. Those girls were still in great pain."

His friend broke into laughter and said, "Don't boast. I know you had one girlfriend who later became your wife."

The bald man felt uncomfortable, smiled, and continued the game of pool.

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Bdud 'dul's face showed great sadness, and it seemed his illness worsened daily. When Lha mo asked what was bothering him, he took two pills, replied, "I'm fine," and went to bed without supper. His unhappiness made his wife and son unhappy. They also lacked the appetite to have dinner.

Bdud 'dul dreamed he was naked and lying on a stone altar, his head hanging over the side, facing the ground. Several monks and his relatives, including his cousin, stood and chanted scriptures a few meters from the altar. A monk holding a big axe stood near the altar. Vultures hovered in the blue sky, and some flew down near the people. They chased one another, flapping and stretching their wings, craning their necks, and looking over the altar. The monk raised the axe as the other monks chanted and blew conch shells. Bdud 'dul woke with sweat when the monk hit his back with the axe.

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Nyi ma went to see a monk in the local monastery when Lha mo asked him to consult the monk about her husband's situation. Nyi ma sat beside the adobe house entrance to await the monk's return from teaching. An hour later, an old white-haired monk came. They entered the room and sat on dry yak skins near the stove. Nyi ma

told the monk about Bdud 'dul. The monk chanted a mantra and blew over a sifter he held in his palm, then touched it to his forehead and closed his eyes. He placed the sifter on his lap, read the number, and said, "No big problem. Evils do not possess him. He's unhappy and depressed because he's paying the price for his actions."

Bdud 'dul's family and Nyi ma were glad that Bdud 'dul wasn't tortured by ghosts.

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It was September. Don grub returned to school, and his mother herded their family's yaks. Bdud 'dul rested in the shade of his family's tent near the entrance, reciting scripture and spinning a prayer wheel. He looked at the high mountains. Suddenly, the grass on the mountain turned from gray to green. His heart pounded at that sudden transition. He put down his prayer wheel and rubbed his eyes. He blinked several times, opening his eyes wide to look at the mountains, and realized the grass was indeed green. When he felt calm after his fantasy, he was confused to discover the prayer wheel on the ground. "How did I throw it on the ground?" he wondered and later imagined how it happened.

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Bdud 'dul saw Nyi ma's wife, Mtsho mo, walk toward his family as his family's watchdog barked. He invited Mtsho mo into the tent and offered tea. She was tortured by a falling out with Nyi ma, suspecting he was having sex with Lha mo. She didn't tell Bdud 'dul who Nyi ma was seeing, but he knew. She sobbed, and tears trickled down her cheeks like raindrops. Bdud 'dul consoled, "Forget it. Be a tolerant wife."

"I love him so much. I can't allow him to love another woman," she protested.

"I'm sure he loves you too. Forget it."

"You know I can't have children. Nyi ma wants to marry his lover and have children."

"Don't think too much. Forgive him if you don't want to divorce him. Forgiving him will mend the conflict."

Bdud 'dul took a deep breath to calm himself. When Nyi ma

visited him in prison, he asked Nyi ma to care for Lha mo and Don grub. He was sure Nyi ma was caring for his wife as he asked, which had built a relationship between Nyi ma and Lha mo. He added, "It's not your fault. It's not Nyi ma's fault. It's my fault. I messed up everything."

Mtsho mo didn't pay much attention and continued sobbing, eventually returning home with a swollen face and hoarse voice.

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Skya lu, in his early sixties, was the poorest and laziest man in their village. His wife and daughter were also lazy. He visited Bdud 'dul and spent the night at his home. Skya lu often rested at home and would say, "My life is predoomed to be poor. No matter how hard I work, I can't become rich since the fortuneteller predicted my life." His relatives and neighbors frequently urged and encouraged him to herd his family's yaks well after wolves once killed some of his family's yaks.

Skya lu repeatedly told Bdud 'dul, "You're the best man I know. You often help my family. We are grateful. I'll never forget your kindness."

Bdud 'dul loaned money to Skya lu when his son or daughter got sick and needed medicine and sometimes gave money to Skya lu to purchase food and clothes for his family.

As they chatted, Bdud 'dul looked at Skya lu's faded robe and shirt and encouraged him to drink more tea. Bdud 'dul recalled Skya lu's story:

When I was younger, a fortuneteller came to my place and predicted I would be poor because he saw only a few barley grains in the bottom of a leather bag when he divined for me.

Bdud 'dul was scared when he thought about the fortuneteller. He interjected and asked, "When will grass turn green to gray?"

"Late September, early October," replied Skya lu.

Suddenly, Bdud 'dul began thinking about the fortuneteller and what he had said to him. Skya lu continued talking, but when

he asked a question, Bdud 'dul was so disengaged Skya lu had to repeat his question.

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On Saturday, locals came to town to pick up their children from the local boarding school and take them home for the weekend. As Bdud 'dul and his son walked near the police station, they saw a crowd gathered at the police station entrance, where two policemen were escorting a man with long hair and shackled hands inside. A young policeman holding a monk's cassock and a yellow bag followed them. No one from the crowd knew the detainee and assumed he was an outsider. As the crowd speculated the man's crime, Bdud 'dul craned his neck, clearly seeing the man's face as he entered the yard. Bdud 'dul thought, "He looks like the tantric practitioner I met a few weeks ago!" but then told himself, "Impossible!"

Suddenly, a teenage boy wearing sunglasses spat in Bdud 'dul's face and grasped the handle of a long knife inside his sash. It took a second for Bdud 'dul to recognize it was Do do's son. Bdud 'dul grabbed his son's hand, and they walked quickly away. The boy spat at them and snarled, "Fucker!" as his friends seized him and urged him not to throw a rock at Bdud 'dul.

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The police leader slumped into an armchair beside a policewoman sitting at a table, taking notes on what the accused was saying. The police leader said, "You told a couple with three daughters to give you a yak, and you would help them have a son. Is that true?"

The man thought then replied, "I could chant scripture and help them have a child. That's what I said. I didn't say the child would be a son or daughter."

The policeman shouted, "Liar! You may cheat others, but that doesn't mean you're smart enough to deceive me. They gave you a yak because you promised the wife would give birth to a son. Right? But then she gave birth to another daughter. Not a son."

"I told them the wife would give birth to a child. I didn't promise they would have a son."

"Where's the yak you took from them?"

"I sold it."

The policeman hit the table with his fist, stood up, and said, "Bullshit! Fake monk. Shame on you."

I'm not a fake monk. I'm a real monk."

"Why aren't you wearing your monk robe if you're a real monk?"

"When I tried to jump across a stream this morning, I fell in the water, and my clothes got wet. I was cold and went to a home. The family didn't have monk robes, so the man of the family gave me some of his clothes, and I put them on."

The policeman chuckled and said, "Don't play smart with me! Tell the truth. It's good for you."

The man said, "I dare not lie to anyone. If I lie to you, it means I violated my religious vow. Breaking a religious vow is an unatoneable sin."

The policeman and his colleague shook their heads in disbelief.

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When Bdud 'dul was about to go to bed without dinner, Don grub looked at his father's gaunt face, clutched his leg, and begged him to eat. Bdud 'dul sat back on the ground. Don grub knelt behind him, embraced him, and kissed his cheek. Bdud 'dul patted his son's head, kissing his forehead as his son smiled.

Lha mo sat beside her husband, looked at him a bit later, and accused, "Coward! You should have beaten him. I will fight back if a man spits in my face. How shameful! He spat in your face and called you 'bastard,' and you walked away. Others say you were afraid of him."

Bdud 'dul silently thought, "Of course, he hates me and wants to kill me. If someone killed my father, I would try to kill them. I must endure whatever the boy does to me. I won't hurt him and bring more suffering to his grandmother."

But then he thought, "Maybe Lha mo is right. Maybe I should beat him and teach him a lesson, or he'll think I'm afraid of

him. People bully you when you do nothing. No, no! I won't make another mistake and won't hurt that boy and his grandmother again."

After a bowl of noodles for dinner, he kissed his son's forehead and asked him to go to bed.

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The snow-clad village in October was a time and place when distant birds were the only living beings making noise. Bdud 'dul motionlessly stood near the tent entrance, gazing at the snowcapped mountains. A shudder of fear passed through him as he thought, "Death is coming for me."

While Lha mo was outside milking yaks, he entered the canvas tent, stood on a small stool, and hung a rope with a noose from a roof pole.

Don grub told his mother about a teacher beating a student with a stick because he hadn't finished his homework. Unable to bear the pain, the boy had run from one classroom corner to another. His son's joyful laughter reminded him of his childhood and how much he had admired neighbors' children who happily sat on horses behind their fathers. Recalling that children with parents are the happiest and luckiest, Bdud 'dul removed the noose from his neck.

Bright sunshine melted the snow in an hour. The green grass was now gray.

After escorting Don grub to school, Bdud 'dul headed home. A man hailed him on the Yellow River Bridge for a ride. At first, Bdud 'dul didn't recognize him but soon realized it was the man he had met two months earlier. The man's hair was now short and wore a black fabric robe. Disembarking from his motorcycle Bdud 'dul unsheathed his knife as the man approached and then stabbed the man's belly. The man's face turned pale as blood spurted out of his mouth. Bdud 'dul stabbed him several times until he toppled to the ground as blood pooled on the bridge. Bdud 'dul spat in the man's face declaring, "You are now dying when the grass is gray."

Two police cars and an ambulance screamed toward the

bridge with shrieking sirens, shocking everyone. People scrambled out of restaurants and shops, gathering in the town center, talking to one another, and wondering what had happened.

Bdud 'dul leaned against a bridge barrier, still holding his knife, blood slowly dripping from the crimson blade. Some bystanders stood near the bleeding man, but no one dared approach Bdud 'dul.

Having arrived quickly, the police chief got out of his car and pointed his pistol at Bdud 'dul, who flung his knife into the river. Some policemen helped two doctors carry the pale-faced victim to the ambulance. Bdud 'dul confessed, "I stabbed him," and didn't resist as the police cuffed his wrists.

The next day, Lha mo and Nyi ma were in the police station yard with the police chief, who explained, "The victim was a fake monk. He met your husband two months ago and told him, 'You will die when the grass turns gray.' Your husband believed that and was very depressed as a result. You know how miserable Bdud 'dul has been recently."

Better understanding what Bhud 'dul had suffered, Lha mo's gaze shifted from the police chief to the mountains encircling the town. Her eyes filled with tears as she realized the grass had turned completely gray.

#### TIBETAN TERMS

bdud 'dul བདུད་འདུལ།

do do དོ་དོ།

don grub དོན་གུབ།

gu ru 'phrin las ཀུ་རུ་འཕྱིན་ལས།

lha mo ལྷ་མོ།

mtsho mo མཚོ་མོ།

nyi ma ཉི་མ།

skya lu སྐལ་ལཱ།

#### CHINESE TERM

Gerichengli 格日成立